

**CALIFORNIA MARINE LIFE PROTECTION ACT INITIATIVE
STATEWIDE INTERESTS GROUP
FEBRUARY 17, 2006 MEETING SUMMARY
(10:00-11:30 a.m. via conference call)**

SIG members present

Steve Campi
Don Canestro
Karen Garrison
Joel Greenberg
Pam Heatherington
Bill James
Ken Kurtis
Robera Larson

Dr. James Liu
Dick Long
Jim Martin
Corrine Monroe
Jesus Ruiz
Steve Scheiblaue
Linda Sheehan
Dan Wolford

Others present

Phil Isenberg (chair, MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force)
Amy Boone (BRTF staff)
John Kirlin (BRTF staff)
Melissa Miller-Henson (BRTF staff)
Maura Leos (notetaker, DFG staff)
John Ugoretz (DFG staff)

Update on the Central Coast Project

Chair Isenberg asked for an overview of the CCRSG process. John Kirlin reported that the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) has received and considered five packages. One of those packages (Package B) was dropped on the advice from the Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) for not meeting criteria laid out in the MLPA Master Plan Framework (MPF). The BRTF urged proponents of the packages to respond to SAT recommendations, meet with MLPA Initiative staff and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), make revisions, and resubmit the packages to the BRTF. Package AC, however, is not undergoing any revisions at this time, nor is the "no action" (existing marine protected areas) alternative. At this time staff is preparing, by request of the BRTF, a separate preferred alternative.

A Statewide Interests Group (SIG) member expressed concern over the timing for stakeholder input based on any possible new metrics put forth by the SAT. At a meeting held on February 6 with members of the SAT, initiative staff, DFG, and package proponents, the SAT indicated there would be no new metrics. The SIG member just wanted to hear that again.

There was curiosity as to what transpired at the February 6 meeting since it was not open to the public; summaries of the SAT sub-team evaluations will be posted to the website. There were no major adjustments made in the evaluation process.

John Kirlin did indicate one minor adjustment which was that, to account for the percentage of habitats in MPAs when the overall habitat amount in the region is extremely small or very large, using a percentage is not the best way to evaluate habitat coverage. The SAT will be

adjusting the test for satisfying habitat coverage in cases where the habitat representation in a subregion is very large or very small. You will see that discussion and explanation in the next SAT meeting summary. It will help close gaps. Regarding Package 1, there was a lot of hard work between package proponents and the SAT to be sure it meets all the guidelines. John Kirlin thanked everyone who participated for their extraordinarily hard work.

A SIG member asked if the SIG could get an individual accounting from the SAT of the vote on the evaluations of the packages. Answer: The audio and video of the SAT meeting and a summary will be posted to the website.

A SIG member wondered how the BRTF will merge different opinions when hearing about the analysis. The member was concerned about any conflicts. Answer: If you are asking if the BRTF will reject SAT guidance where there is conflict, there are reference points in the MPF to resolve conflicts. John Ugoretz indicated that since the SAT guidelines are not prescriptive, the BRTF can still forward the packages and not reject them on their entirety.

A SIG member wondered if there is a guideline that says you can't have an area smaller than what the SAT recommends. Answer: The SAT guidelines are designed to meet some of the goals of the Marine Life Protection Act. Any areas set up to meet other goals won't be analyzed using the SAT guidelines.

A SIG member indicated that the small MPAs in the Monterey Peninsula area do not meet the SAT guidance or the law. The SAT review didn't analyze the packages with respect to the third goal of the MLPA. The SIG member felt there was heavy handed guidance by staff at the February 6 meeting. Divers have concerns over the ramifications of the redesign.

Chair Isenberg stated that the package proponents should come as close as they can to meeting the recommendations made by the SAT.

A SIG member indicated some concern over the fact that the SAT guidance appears to be biological rather than socio-economic, and recommended that there needs to be more balance between the two.

January 31 and February 1 Task Force Meeting

John Kirlin presented a quick overview of the January 31-February 1 BRTF meeting in Monterey. The BRTF approved the long-term funding strategy with minor editing and forwarded it to Secretary Chrisman. The BRTF received and authorized staff to post two framework documents (related to adaptive management) to the website with public comment requested by March 1. The meeting adjourned before the public comment period at 1:00 p.m. A SIG member indicated that this is an issue needing to be addressed. Answer: There is no guarantee of time for public comment and the BRTF will not hang around for hours after completing its work to hear it. The BRTF appreciated hearing the mayor of Morro Bay speak, but the BRTF doesn't need to have any city officials speak in Monterey. The BRTF asks the public to please not organize 500 people to show up just to say the oceans are fine or not.

Update on Lessons Learned Project

John Kirlin discussed the idea of a “lessons learned” document to be produced to assist in the next project area. The Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group was the “pilot” program which will now be repeated. Initiative staff will be producing an operations book of how the process functioned as well as contracting with an outside group to interview stakeholders in order to put together the lessons learned document. Initiative staff will be able to report to the BRTF at the March 14-15 meeting on the progress of this project.

Open Discussion

A SIG member wished to challenge the larval transport theory. He wanted to know what the mechanisms were and if there was funding available to flesh out some additional ideas. Answer: when evidence comes to the SAT they make recommendations. Their guidance has been driven by habitat. The MPF is a living document with best available science, which has been peer reviewed. The peer review will be made public at the March meeting of the SAT. Staff hears an underlying thrust to the concern: you have information to provide and you think you are being shut out of the process. The SIG member answered yes, and wants to know the avenues available to present this information.

The question was asked of the SIG in general if others feel their viewpoints are being shut out.

A SIG member indicated he is trying to get his constituency to comment. However, there has been no “big picture” summary for the lay person, so it has been hard to generate interest. In addition, there has been no time to prepare an analysis once the packages are made available. It would be helpful to be shown the big picture sooner and be given sufficient time to analyze the packages so that we can provide substantive comment.

Another SIG member commented there were a whole lot of representatives from stakeholder groups in the regional process. Those stakeholders were selected to do a filtering and synthesizing of information. It is important to stay in touch with them to find out what is going on with the process and packages. The member is confident that, if the CCRSG process is repeated exactly in Southern California, it will work; he can't make specific comments about the CCRSG since he wasn't there. This is a statement to include in the lessons learned effort. Perhaps it could be done in such a way as to ask, “HOW does it happen?”

There are a number of SIG members that believe the process has had sufficient public input from the beginning. All the packages were offered to the public with nothing hidden. It is possible to comply with the law with an open and participatory process. Even if a person didn't like the outcomes, at least it can't be said there was a preconceived approach or outcome.

SIG members wanted to know who exactly is defined as “staff.” Does staff include California Department of Fish and Game personnel? The answer was no, staff is the MLPA Initiative/BRTF staff, including John Kirlin, Melissa Miller-Henson, Amy Boone and consultants.

DFG is not making any recommendations, only the BRTF staff; DFG advises staff the same way it advises stakeholders and CCRSG members. DFG will make changes to the recommendations before the packages go to the California Fish and Game Commission. This is the way the process was designed; adoption of the MLPA Master Plan Framework is an example.

Staff was commended on getting documents up on the website in a timely manner. Staff stated the website will soon be transferred to the DFG servers and, when fully operational, will be easier to use in locating information.

Chair Isenberg adjourned the call.